

D. DOWNTOWN

Goal:

Create a vibrant, seven-days-a-week, pedestrian-friendly Downtown focused both on the Transportation Center and the historic core area to its immediate north; promote the orderly intensification and, over time, expansion of Downtown.

TOPICS:

- Attractions and Development
- Transit, Parking and Circulation

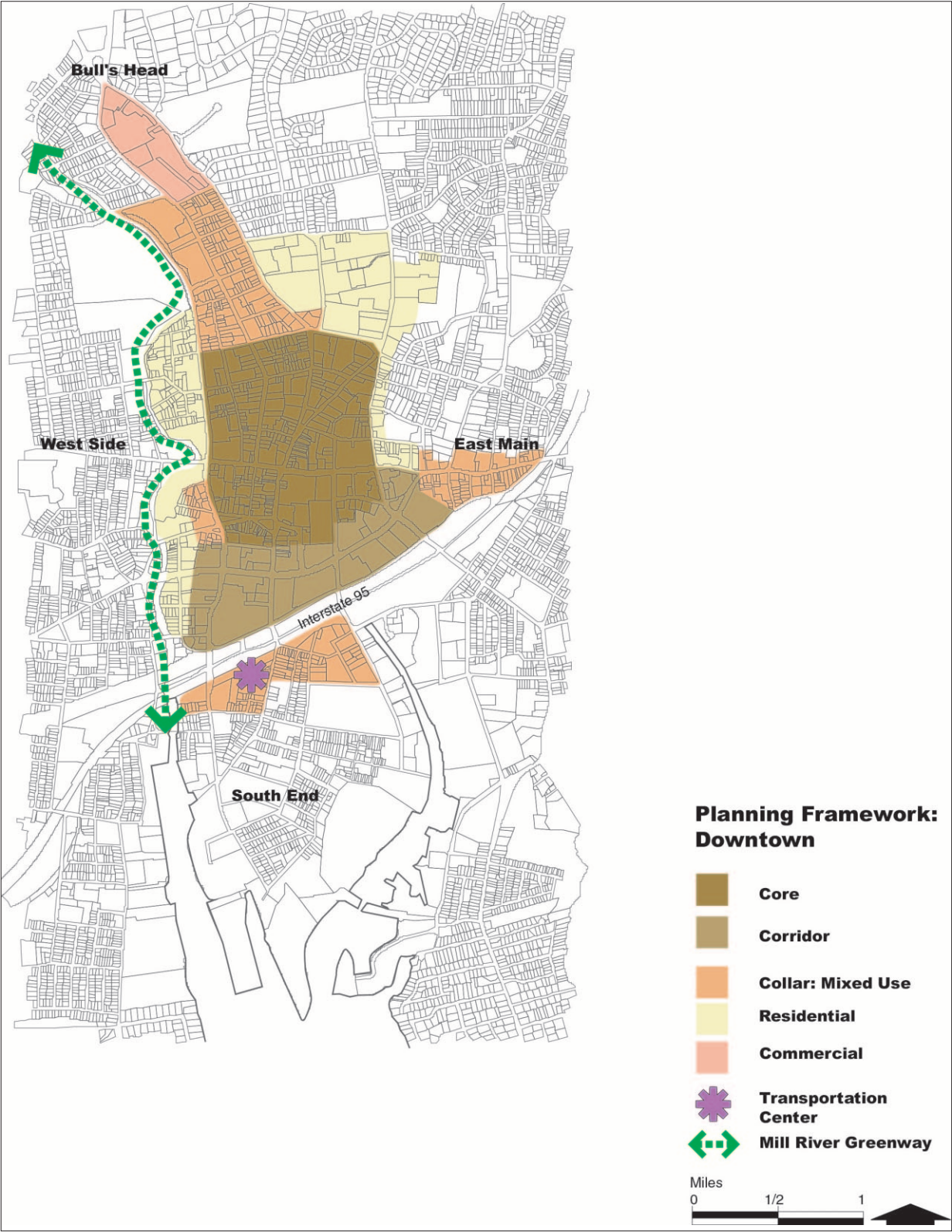
OVERVIEW: DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

A well-designed Downtown is a shared resource for all Stamford residents. While the basic form of Downtown is largely fixed, Downtown is not complete in that there are many opportunities for redevelopment which also provide an opportunity both to manage future growth and bolster the already significant social, economic and cultural resources of Downtown.

The completion of Downtown as a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, day and evening, weekday and weekend environment will entail a variety of initiatives that include: enhancement of the pedestrian network (especially along Broad Street, Main Street and the connections to the Transportation Center); managing transitions in scale between new developments and the neighborhoods; and linking the existing open spaces to each other with an aggressive and comprehensive landscaping plan.

As these initiatives proceed, it is important to recognize that Stamford's Downtown has evolved with two centers of gravity: One center of gravity is created by the highway-scale developments along the Turnpike and Tresser Boulevard "Corridor." The other center of gravity is the original pedestrian "Core," still centered around the intersections of Atlantic, and Broad and Main Streets. Surrounding these two areas is a "Collar" area which can absorb development, but at a lower intensity level, so as to create a satisfactory transition to the adjoining neighborhoods.

Downtown is also the centerpiece of any growth management strategy for the city, both because of access to highways and transit and because there is broad consensus—evident in all outreach elements of the Master Plan—that future growth in Stamford should be mainly directed to its Downtown. Regional Plan Association and



South Western Regional Planning Agency's plans also advocate directing development to areas proximate to major transit resources. The Growth Management studies revealed the theoretical, *physical* potential for millions of square feet of development. One issue, as testified to by key vacant and underutilized parcels, is not the physical capacity of Downtown, but overcoming land assembly and economic obstacles to make these sites the most desirable in the city for development.

The completion of Downtown begs the most contentious issue: what are the boundaries of the Downtown, and how should it expand over time. Zoning maps and text should first and foremost promote infill development, to complete the fabric of the Downtown Core. But additional, generally larger sites on the periphery need to be provided. Otherwise, development that might otherwise go to an *enlarged* Downtown will go to other sites further away, perhaps out of the city. In expanding, the new boundaries can be both sides of South State Street/Urban Transitway Corridor on the south, the Mill River on the west, Bull's Head on the north, and Grove Street/East Main Street on the east. To go beyond these areas would involve destabilizing the adjoining residential and industrial districts. Even within this Collar, development should step down in density and intensity from that permitted in the Core. The operative word is orderly.

Finally, Downtown was the subject of its own Master Plan Addendum, adopted in 1984, which was well ahead of its time in its emphasis on pedestrian amenities and transit. This updated Downtown plan therefore learns from the practical experiences of the past 15+ years, to refine what have been longstanding City policies that have also served the city well. Stamford is the economic engine for the state; and Downtown is the economic engine for the City. The intention is to retain this economic vitality, while making Downtown a "people" place, too.

Objective D1.

Promote Downtown as a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environment.

Opposite: Design and development should create a fine-grained Downtown "Core", intense development along the Tresser Boulevard "Corridor", and stepped-down development within the peripheral "Collar".

Strategies:

D1.1 Continue to employ bonuses as incentives for Downtown amenities and historic preservation. The City has had a considerable but mixed track record with using bonuses to promote public benefits—leading to major revisions which took place in 1999. These bonuses have involved: (1) transfer of development rights, (2) added density, and/or (3) flexibility as to other zoning prescriptions. Successes include preservation of historic structures and creation of public plazas. Vigilance is nonetheless needed to prevent abuse of the bonuses.

D1.2 Adjust regulations to avoid over-development and promote public amenities. The City should recalibrate the FARs (floor area ratios) in Downtown. Considerations should be given to: (1) providing a greater spread between the "as of



Within the Downtown Core, the emphasis is on both people-generators and an active street life.



right" and bonusable FARs – to promote greater use of the bonus provisions tied to public amenities; (2) revisiting the FAR formulas to include all types of development – except for ground-floor retail or cultural uses in the Core and public/shared parking and housing in the Corridor area based on design guidelines to be prepared; and (3) calibrating the FAR within Downtown – with higher densities along the Turnpike/Tresser Boulevard Corridor, in the Downtown Core and opposite the Transportation Center within the Collar area.

D1.3 Prepare a detailed urban design plan for Downtown, clarifying and detailing the recommendations in this Plan. A PDD (Preservation and Design District) plan should be adopted for Downtown, with the active participation of the Downtown Special Services District, the Chamber of Commerce, the Stamford Partnership, the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation, other civic and business groups, and of course property owners and businesses. Overall, the PDD should: (1) establish design guidelines for potential development and redevelopment sites; (2) manage transitions in scale between new developments and existing buildings; (3) weave the green infrastructure of the city into Downtown—as partially accomplished with the Mill River plan; (4) make Downtown more coherent and cohesive, with clear edges and identity; and (5) promote streetscape improvements, such as buried overhead wires, street trees and safe crossings. Beyond these general principles, the PDD should be sure to differentiate between the Downtown Core, the Turnpike/Tresser Boulevard Corridor, and the Collar area.

D1.4 In the Downtown Core: The design strategy should emphasize ground floor retail and pedestrian activity. The intent is to create a place where people like to stroll and linger, and thus dine, shop, live and work. The key elements would be continuous sidewalks, lined with shops, trees, and on-street parking. A maximum amount of the ground floor should be devoted to stores (or cultural uses) facing the sidewalk, with further guidelines for transparency, location of entries, etc. Food courts and other inward looking retail centers should be prohibited, anywhere in the Core, on any floor. Multi-story retail should be conditioned on sidewalk entries, served with escalators or elevators. Large-footprint, multi-story retail should be promoted on upper floors and in basements, so as to accommodate the large stores that would have a hard time finding ground-floor space, and which would eat up sidewalk frontage otherwise suited to smaller stores that contribute more to the street life of Downtown. Outdoor dining should be allowed always; and outdoor sales should be allowed on weekends—in both cases provided sufficient room is left for passersby. However, there should be no regulation of building materials, colors, window glazing, etc. Downtown's Core should remain visually eclectic and exciting.

D1.5 Also in the Downtown Core: Public plazas and spaces should be

highlighted. Broad Street should be promoted as the "Main Street" of Downtown, consistent with recommendations put forward by the Downtown Special Services District. The roads—especially Atlantic Street—leading down to the Transportation Center should receive special attention for pedestrian enhancements. The Mill River Central Park should be designed as a green refuge from the hustle and bustle of downtown. The design of the "bow tie" created by the crossing of Main and Bank Streets should be upgraded as a public market space lined with outdoor cafes and restaurants; also with public uses in Old City Hall (e.g., museum, restaurant), and across the street at the entry to the proposed Central Park. The Stamford Town Center mall should be opened up with grand entries from Veteran's Park, Greyrock Place and Broad Street. The existing connection through the mall should be radically redesigned as a true arcade, so as to restore the original continuity of Main Street.

D1.6 In the Tresser Boulevard Corridor: The design strategy should focus on accommodating large-scale development and automobile convenience, while enhancing the pedestrian environment. The keys are: (1) attractive pedestrian routes through the area, (2) special design consideration to the

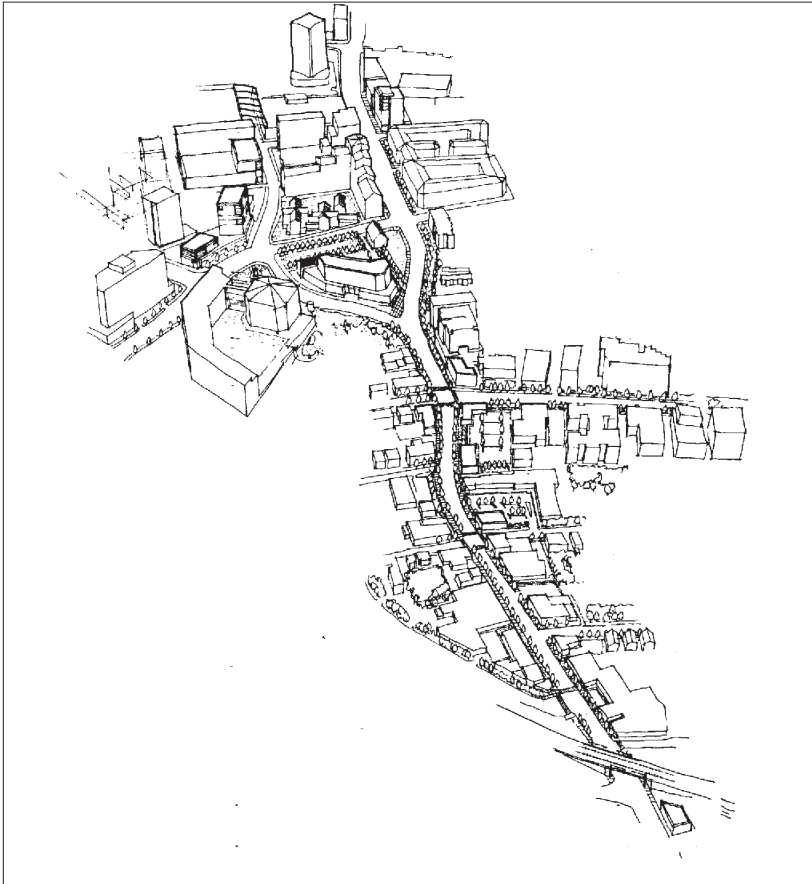


intersections across Tresser Boulevard, but also under the elevated Turnpike highway and Amtrak rail line, and (3) the pedestrian experience in plazas or along the sidewalk. In the Corridor, special attention should be paid to: (1) the skyline, i.e., the bulk and mass of buildings on the remaining potential sites, and (2) the creative reuse of the above-ground plazas, e.g., for recreation, outdoor dining, and special events. The City should also prohibit future retail (including cafeterias) that does not have sidewalk or plaza entries.

D1.7 Also in the Tresser Boulevard Corridor: The design strategy should promote the long-term redevelopment and redesign of Downtown's eastern gateway at the intersection of Elm, Main and Broad Streets. This redesign would feature preservation of the Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church, an open space, and plaza setback along Grove Street to create a civic environment, and a view corridor along East Main Street. It could involve redevelopment and/or expansion of the adjoining hotel. The site's designation for intensive development is intended to promote the coupling of urban design improvements and development. Ultimately, a MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay District) may be needed to realize this linkage.



Along the Corridor, the emphasis is on creating an attractive environment for pedestrians while still accommodating the automobile .



Neighborhood transitions, gateways and the corridors leading in and out of Downtown should be carefully looked at (as illustrated for East Main Street).

D1.8 In the Collar: The design strategy should promote a safe pedestrian network and orderly transition to adjoining neighborhoods. This would involve (1) a step-down in development density and/or intensity from the Core and Corridor, sometimes involving mixed-uses at a lower density, sometimes allowing only housing (except opposite the Transportation Center, where a high level of density makes ample sense), (2) contextual development, such as along Grove Street, (3) street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, bus shelters, and other

pedestrian amenities, (4) prohibitions against skywalks, ground-floor garage space, and other design features that kill public enjoyment of public spaces, (5) pedestrian linkages between the different parts of Downtown, to the Transportation Center, and onward to nearby residential neighborhoods, and (6) traffic calming—such as neck-downs at crosswalks—to reduce vehicular/pedestrian conflicts. The design of the radial corridors should receive special attention for pedestrian enhancements, and contextual design guidelines, to create a sense of continuity as they extend into adjoining neighborhoods. The design strategy should also address the different scales and intensities foreseen, e.g., lower-scaled contextual development along Summer Street and Bedford Street, and high-density development near the Transportation Center.

Objective D2.

Focus retail, entertainment, office, hotel and multifamily development in Downtown.

Strategies:

D2.1 Direct office development to Downtown. Downtown is the one part of Stamford that has the mass transit infrastructure and the community's support for

major new office development. Office development also bolsters Downtown's potential as an arts, entertainment, and retailing center. As a general policy, the City should: (1) direct office development to Downtown and away from other districts; and (2) within Downtown, prioritize infill development that increases the overall density in the Core, rather than promoting a spreading out of Downtown. As in the past, the Urban Redevelopment Commission may need to step into the fray to assemble property and enable development to go forward.

D2.2 Direct hotel development to Downtown. Downtown offers suitable sites to sustain hotel development. It offers (1) highway visibility for transients, (2) residential neighbors for extended-stay guests, (3) proximity to most of the city's corporations for business travelers, and (4) arts, entertainment, shopping and dining for all types of hotel guests. Hotels have added benefits for Downtown, as well. Peak parking demand is in the evening, after offices empty out. Hotels provide health clubs and other amenities often open to the general public on a fee basis. Their guests provide added support for arts, entertainment, stores and especially restaurants. Furthermore, given the variety of hotel prototypes, they lend themselves to infill development and adaptive reuse of historic structures. This symbiosis substantiates a policy of directing hotels to Downtown (though conference centers and motels are different products which may be appropriate outside of Downtown).

D2.3 Promote Downtown living. Housing in Downtown makes sense on multiple levels. First, it provides additional clientele for Downtown's stores, as well as contributes to the image of Downtown as a safe place to be after office hours. Second, Downtown housing in Stamford is within walking distance of a majority of the city's jobs and the Transportation Center; therefore, Downtown housing can redress the basic housing/jobs imbalance without unduly adding to traffic congestion. Third, Downtown is the one part of the city where residents do not view apartment buildings as disruptive to the prevailing character and scale of neighborhoods. Given Downtown's assets, the enormous demand for housing in the region, and Stamford's positive reputation as a place to live and raise children, there is significant long-term demand for housing in Downtown. The City should: (1) be prepared to assemble appropriate sites for housing; (2) intervene, as it has with the Mill River Plan, to create parks and other housing amenities; (3) actively promote a Downtown supermarket and pharmacy; and (4) insist upon high design standards. In order to promote sustainable Downtown housing that will keep its value over time and in down markets, the City needs to promote a residential neighborhood, not just housing projects.

D2.4 Promote a regional arts and entertainment district in Downtown. Arts and entertainment comes in all shapes, sizes, and forms—ranging from an artist



The urban design studies found more than enough opportunity for new development in Downtown.



Downtown should be helped to flourish as a regional arts, entertainment and dining destination (Courtesy of the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation).

live/work space to a museum gallery, from a jazz café to a symphony hall, from a health club to a bowling alley, and from a single outdoor event to a film festival. In 1997, the City formed the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation (SCDC) to promote and direct funding to arts and entertainment in the city, and the SCDC has rightfully focused much of its effort on Downtown venues and opportunities. After all, Downtown is where the largest audience and patronage can be garnered. The Planning Board, Zoning Board, Downtown Special Services District and SCDC should continue to cooperate on promoting arts and

entertainment in Downtown. Mindful of their shared interest in the physical plant for arts and entertainment, these groups should jointly focus on: (1) how to integrate arts into the physical landscape (e.g., murals on construction walls, artist window displays in vacant storefronts, public art, etc.); (2) how to promote more efficient use of existing spaces (such as the Rich Forum); and (3) how to create more and more affordable space for arts and entertainment (as discussed next).

D2.5 Provide additional incentives for arts and entertainment in Downtown. To further promote the arts and entertainment, the City should extend free floor area for ground floor cultural uses, and for upper-floor cultural uses with appropriate deed restrictions (to prevent their later reuse as conventional offices, for instance). The City should also carry out a "percent for art and amenities" program for all projects involving City, State or Federal funding. The City already has a "percent for..." program for its own projects and those carried out by the Urban Redevelopment Commission. Three-fourths of the money garnered from this program is now directed to the restoration of Old Town Hall. The new program would absorb and expand this existing program, and serve to enrich additional projects and priorities. The SCDC (Stamford Cultural Development Corporation) can play a key role in monitoring cultural space agreements and "percent for..." expenditures.

D2.6 Promote a vibrant regional downtown shopping and dining destination. The keys to meeting this objective are in fact elaborated upon elsewhere, as follows: (1) providing a critical mass of shopping and dining opportunities on the streets and sidewalks of Downtown; (2) creating a varied and week-long source of

demand for local businesses, especially restaurants; (3) paying close attention to the details of how parking, circulation and transit are handled; and (4) constraining development that will drain energy from Downtown. Downtown cannot compete with the conventional mall—though a mall can compete with Downtown, and is therefore prohibited elsewhere in the city. Downtown must stake out its position as a specialty-shopping district, where people come for a variety of reasons—to go to work, go home, attend a concert, or simply walk around.

D2.7 Focus large-scale retail in Downtown. As part of the prior policy, the City should continue to take a dim view of large-scale retail development—including large entertainment-based retail complexes—outside of Downtown. Similarly, the City should continue to prohibit superstores (of over 30,000 square feet) except in Downtown or under prescribed circumstances (such as in connection with MODs—Mixed-use Overlay Districts). Note that two exceptions are now made to this policy: (1) supermarkets outside of Downtown; and (2) large furniture and antique establishments in industrial districts. Both of these exceptions should be retained. Large-format supermarkets are a necessary convenience and help to keep the costs of food and other necessities affordable. Large furniture and antique establishments involve warehousing as much as the display of goods. Both are marginal profit businesses, more suited to areas outside of Downtown, where space comes at a premium.

Strategies:

D3.1 Continue to employ urban renewal powers to promote development in Downtown. Downtown Stamford is unique in that in addition to zoning tools and incentives, the City long ago designated much of the area under urban renewal. The City's Urban Redevelopment Commission retains significant power to condemn property in Downtown. This power—judiciously used—can enable major developments to go forward. Even the threat of condemnation can help deal with the problems associated with assemblages. This is especially important given speculative patterns of investment in Downtown property.

D3.2 Promote in-fill development and redevelopment on vacant sites within Downtown. A variety of strategies should be employed here. First, the City should actively promote shared parking—both to solve the parking problem and to reduce the amount of land and sidewalk frontages deadened by parking facilities. Second, the City should continue to use a variety of density bonuses that enable development to go forward on otherwise hard-to-develop sites. Third, the City should adopt detailed urban design guidelines for a Downtown PDD (Preservation and Design District) that suggest building alignments and massing, and also pre-

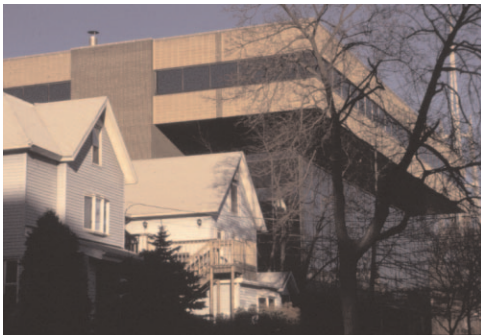
Objective D3.

*Manage the orderly expansion of
Downtown, over time.*

scribe important infill development linked to larger-scale developments. As appropriate and necessary, these guidelines could supersede the generic height limits and setback requirements.

D3.3 To the south: The boundary for Downtown should remain just south of the railroad—fronting Station Place and the proposed Urban Transitway (Dock Street Connector), with possible expansion at or to any future ferry stop.

Going further south would destabilize the industrial and residential area, and set off a wave of land use speculation, as well as promote development simply too far away from the Core to have meaningful pedestrian connections. Office development at an intermediate scale (e.g., half that allowed along the Tresser Boulevard Corridor) would be suited to this area, except at the Transportation Center, where higher densities are justified. Expansion of commercial development into this area should be conditioned on: (1) the roadway improvements envisioned in the Urban Transitway Plan, (2) pedestrian improvements at the Transportation Center and in the entirety of the area, (3) provision of ferry service, (4) ground-floor retail, and (5) agreements to concur with any expansion of the Downtown Special Services District, to ensure this area's full integration with the other commercial parts of Downtown.



Design guidelines to the north should avoid jarring juxtapositions (pictured above) and promote contextual development and historic preservation (right and below).



D3.4 To the west: Pursue the Mill River Plan. The City has spent decades planning for the area due west of the Downtown Core, which is to be redeveloped mainly as a residential district featuring a new riverside Central Park. Some details of this plan will surely change due to the practicalities of development and park planning. But the thrust of this plan is sound: to create a Downtown residential district (as distinct from a housing project) featuring a major park amenity shared by Downtown and the West Side neighborhood.



D3.5 To the north: Promote contextual commercial and especially residential development along the one-way pair comprised of Summer and Bedford Streets. Along Summer Street between North Street and

Second Street, guidelines should: (1) call for buildings flush with the sidewalks, with entries facing the street, and landscaping to maintain the street wall where parking is provided—so as to create a cohesive and attractive walking corridor with shops, etc.; and (2) allow the reuse of existing office buildings and the development of comparably-sized buildings—so as to promote the intermediate scale of the corridor. Along Summer Street and Bedford Street between Second and Sixth Streets, the

PDD guidelines should call for (1) preservation of the historic houses; and (2) either house-like buildings (like those that prevail) and/or landscaped setbacks—so as to create a green and attractively landscaped driving corridor and a suitable transition to adjoining residential areas. Retail development should be prohibited along Bedford Street.

D3.6 To the east: Generally promote high-density housing. On the east side of Bedford Street, high-density housing can create an attractive transition from the mixed-use Core to adjoining lower-density residential areas. Along East Main Street from the Core to the railroad overpass, redevelopment should be promoted to upgrade a now unattractive route. Redevelopment on East Main should be tied to setbacks and right-of-way options to allow the eventual roadway widening.

D3.7 Over time, once these expansion areas are accounted for, consider additional expansions. While as much as 20 years away, it is useful to consider where subsequent development might take place. For example, intense redevelopment of the Yale & Towne site, if ever permitted, should await completion of the Urban Transitway and be accompanied by other access and roadway improvements. The Mill River park redevelopment could be extended south to the West Branch and north to Scalzi Park, though incremental park and housing development should proceed. Redevelopment of Bulls Head may make sense at some point. All of these areas are now stable or self-sustaining from an economic point of view, and beyond the pale for Downtown-scaled development until closer-in areas are redeveloped. Their intense redevelopment is not preferred for the foreseeable future.

OVERVIEW: TRANSIT, PARKING, AND CIRCULATION

Downtown, as an agglomeration of real estate, ultimately owes much of its success to its position at the nexus of transit and highway, within an hour's traveling time of Manhattan by rail and car, and within one of the nation's most affluent counties. That said, Downtown will only stay as prosperous as it stays convenient—to mass transit riders as well as to automobile drivers, and to pedestrians as well as to commuters.

Stamford's Transportation Center is the busiest in the State, and one of the busiest in the nation. However, residents complain about inadequate parking, pedestrian comforts going to and from the Center, and inconvenient bus connections. Passenger pickup areas also need improvement.

Downtown Stamford is served by two highway exits on the Turnpike, with several north-south roads that provide easy access to more highway exits on the Merritt Parkway. Tresser Boulevard and Washington Boulevard provide channelized routes

for vehicles within Downtown, to the other major arterials that fan out in all directions. While residents and commuters can be expected to complain about any amount of congestion, traffic studies show that Downtown itself is relatively congestion free considering the amount of activity going on. Downtown's major congestion problems are limited to rush hours, when traffic on the Turnpike slows to a crawl—a condition that the City of Stamford has no ability to significantly alter.

Unfortunately, Downtown does not have the right type of parking, even though it has ample supply. There are thousands of parking spaces in Downtown. But most of the facilities are private and dedicated to a single use—usually office buildings. Consequently, even when many lots are virtually empty, there are parking shortages for various categories of users and in various parts of Downtown.

Objective D4.

Amplify the importance of the Transportation Center as a regional and local transit resource.

Strategies:

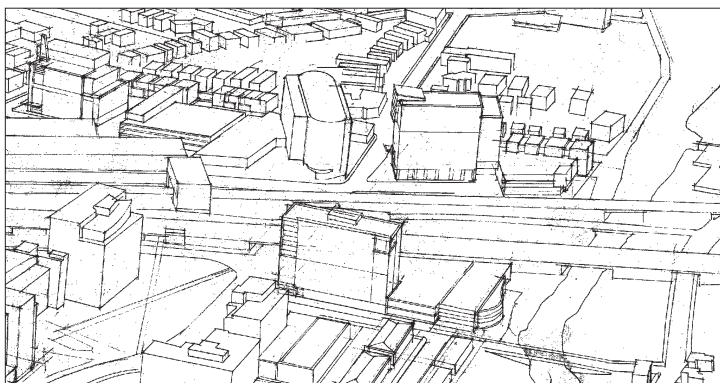
D4.1 Promote a Downtown shuttle bus network, centered around the Transportation Center. There is insufficient demand to operate a street-running

trolley on its own right-of-way. But the recurrent call for a trolley and the fact that a number of corporations provide their own shuttles to the Transportation Center both indicate support for a high-image transit loop in Downtown. Currently, there are two bus routes designed to shuttle people between the Stamford Transportation Center and the major concentrations of office buildings in the Downtown area. The bus and train schedules are uncoordinated, leaving many patrons with poor connections and making it less likely that they will choose to use the rail-bus combination. The bus schedules should be augmented to insure that the connecting time does not exceed ten minutes in most instances during peak commuter times. Specially-marked smaller and more nimble buses should be used. This

will require an expansion of CT Transit bus service frequency and of the span of service over a wider peak period, requiring additional subsidy to cover the higher bus costs, for which the City should press in Hartford.

D4.2 Promote connections between the Downtown and other centers of activity in Stamford. Bus service should be offered on a frequent basis in the peak period and on a regular schedule at other times from the Downtown to key locations in the South End, Cove-East Side, Glenbrook, Waterside, the West Side, and the Long Ridge Road and High Ridge Road corridors.

D4.3 Consider ferry service from the city's waterfront. Ferries from Stamford



The Transportation Center and Stamford Urban Transitway justify a narrow band of Downtown development at the northern edge of the South End.

to LaGuardia Airport, Manhattan and Long Island have been discussed. As for the airport ferry, it is unclear if there is sufficient demand from Fairfield County to make the service financially feasible. As for the commuter service to Manhattan, the current ground option by commuter rail is fast, and is much more frequent and less expensive than a ferry is likely to be. The City should therefore work with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to focus on ferry options from Stamford to Long Island—such study should precede heavy investment in the necessary marine facilities. Should ferry service prove viable, limited, transit-friendly development such as a restaurant/inn, small-scale offices and conference center (not conventional hotel) could be considered at the ferry stop, provided that they are tied to improvements and amenities to make the ferry area vibrant and appealing to pedestrians.

D4.4 Promote transit-friendly development at the Transportation Center.

The area around the Transportation Center should be a special place. It is handicapped by its proximity to the Turnpike, and it will take much design innovation to make the area pleasant for pedestrians and transit riders. Toward that end, any proposed development on such properties should be subject to an urban design review that addresses pedestrian circulation and safety, ground-floor uses, public art, seating, lighting and vegetation.

D4.5 Consider another rail station with transit-friendly development at East Main Street. The New Canaan line deviates from the main branch and crosses East Main Street at the eastern edge of Downtown. MetroNorth should be approached about the possibility of a rail station at this location. If doable, significant increases in commercial and especially residential development could be carried out in the immediate vicinity. Such higher-density development should be predicated on ground-floor retail on East Main Street, reduced parking, and other transit-friendly design principles.

D4.6 Bolster Connecticut rail service. The City should lobby State government for transit funding to make certain service can be expanded, fares kept down, feeder services made robust and parking along the New Haven line expanded. The greatest inhibitor to use of the MetroNorth rail service today is the absence of adequate parking capacity at other stations in Connecticut east of Stamford. The large volumes of New York-bound commuters, most traveling earlier in the day, tend to use up spaces that commuters to Stamford might wish to use. Some progress has been made recently with commitments to expand parking in Fairfield. Stamford should support those efforts, even though they are in other jurisdictions. In recent years, remarkable progress has been made by MetroNorth, working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), to increase service and lower fares for intra-state and reverse commute service. The result has been large

ridership increases and an expanded market from which Stamford can draw its labor force. The City should advocate 20-minute or shorter headways during the rush hour, in either direction; and 30-minute or shorter headways in evening service.

Objective D5.

Prepare a coordinated wayfinding and parking management plan for Downtown.

Strategies:

D5.1 Prepare a parking management strategy. The Urban Renewal Commission has authorized a parking study, and the Downtown Special Services District has prepared comments on this study. These can provide the foundation for the management strategy. The key elements of the parking strategy should be maximizing the number of on-street parking spaces, and assuring their turnover to encourage shopping and dining, with longer-term parking in off-street lots and garages that are well-signed and situated. A further element would be to create shared parking garages and lots—used by offices on weekdays and shoppers/diners in the evenings and on weekends, as well as residents and hotel patrons overnight.

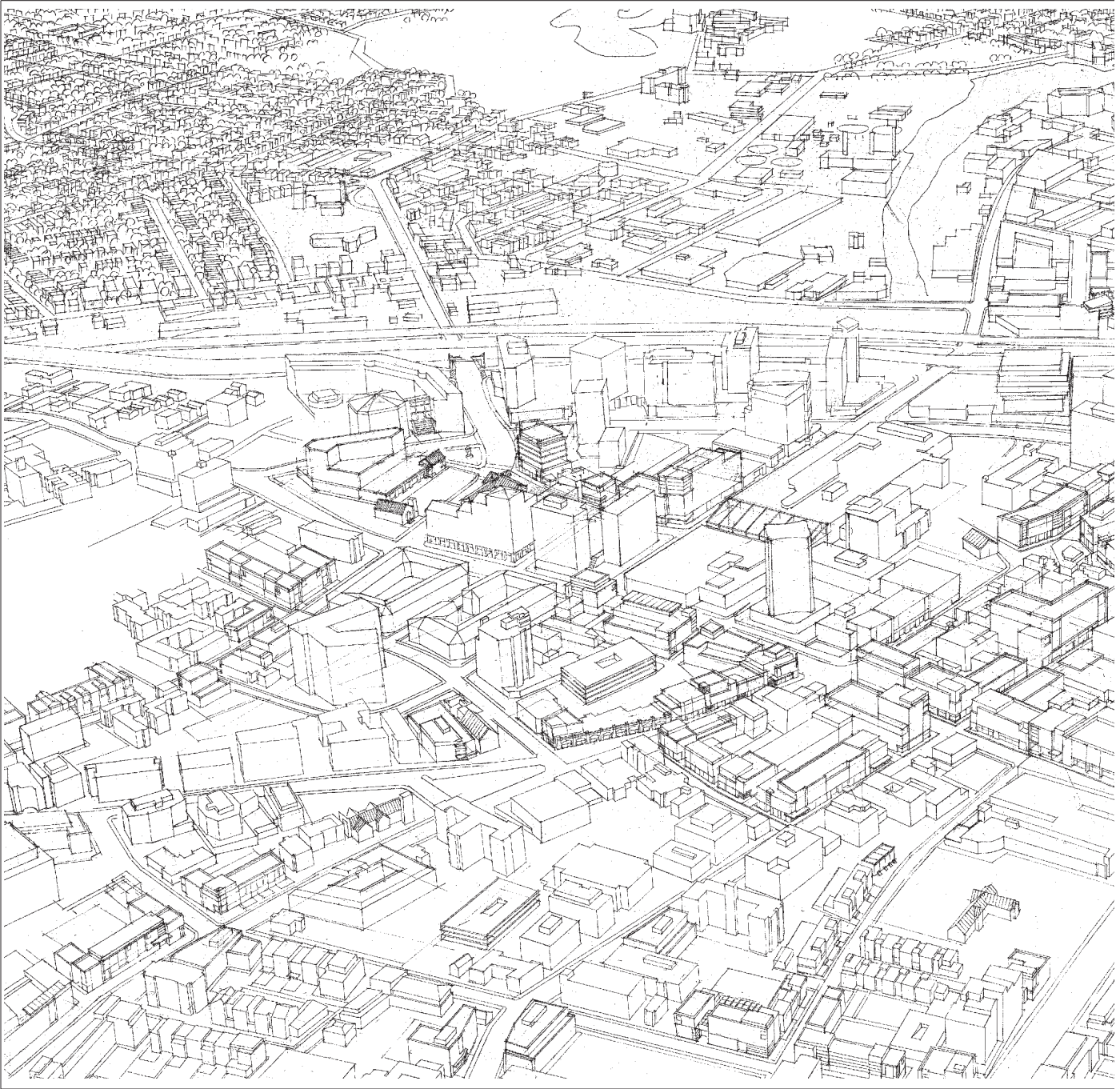


Incentives and guidelines should promote shared parking in garages that respect high design standards and pedestrians (more like the top and less like the bottom).

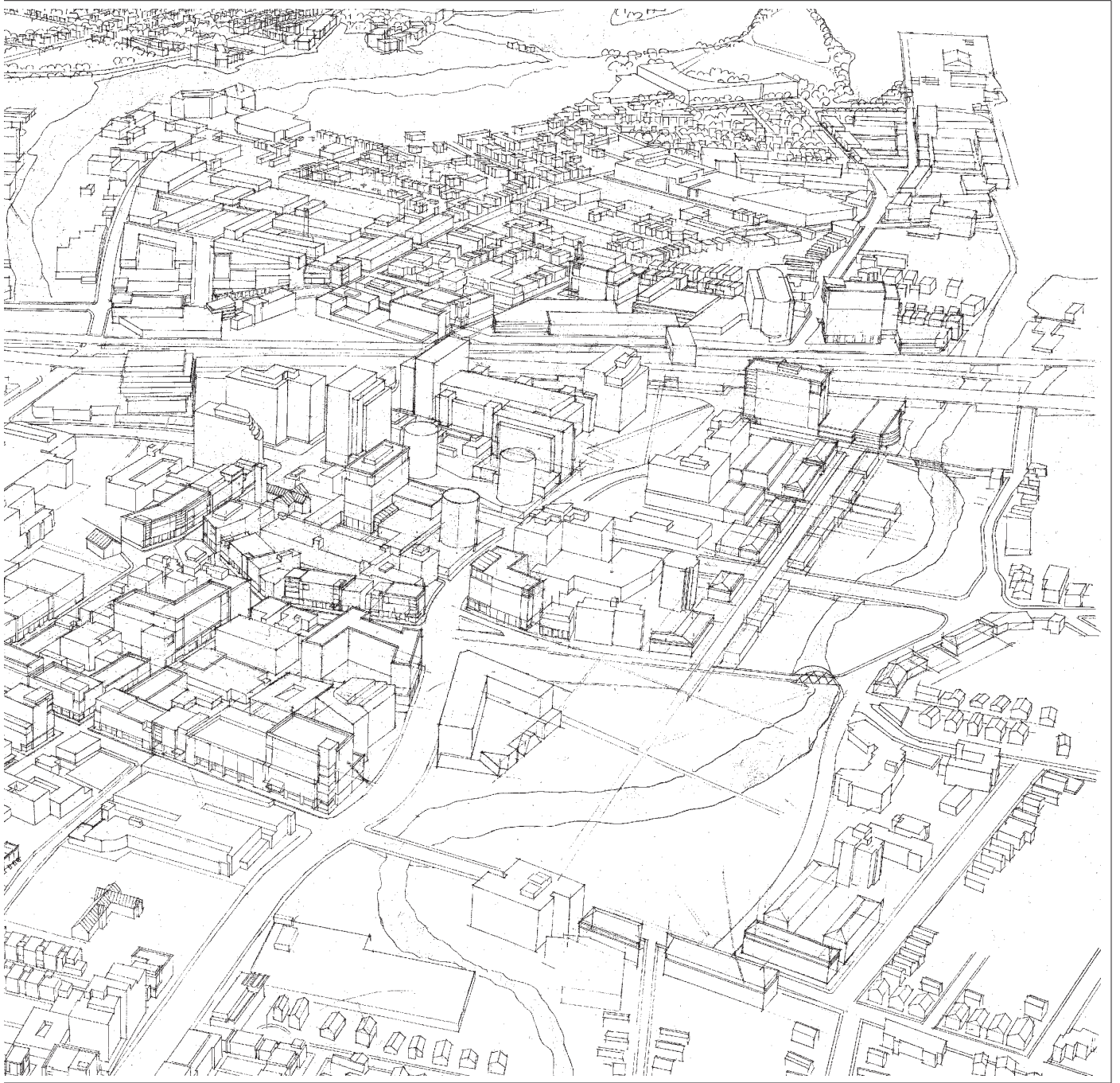
D5.2 As part of the parking management strategy: Carry out a wayfinding/signage strategy for all parking. Not only must there be sufficient parking, it must be seen. A unified parking signage system, pointing to free and public parking, would help.



D5.3 Expand upon the zoning incentives for shared and public parking. There are already bonuses for shared and public parking. There is also a provision allowing Payments in Lieu of Parking (PILOPs), which should be retained, though it is hardly used. As a further inducement, private parking should count toward FAR (Floor Area Ratio), while public and shared parking should not (right now, all parking does not count toward FAR). The City should also consider providing tax incentives for set-aside of the most convenient spaces as public parking.



The overall vision is a lively, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly Downtown, able to absorb significant new development that would otherwise de-stabilize the neighborhoods.



D5.4 Reduce required parking ratios, overall. The required parking ratio for offices should be reduced from 3 to 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Office developers indicate that lenders and tenants insist on a higher ratio, even though parking studies in Downtown show that 2.5 spaces is more than adequate. If developers still prefer to go to a higher ratio, then the additional spaces should be made available to the public during times when the offices are less active, i.e., evenings and weekends. With all applications of these incentives, shared and public parking spaces should be provided on the ground floor or the portions of the garage or lot that is most convenient to shoppers and diners.

D5.5 Mandate lower parking requirements for office buildings near the Stamford Transportation Center. If sites zoned for offices have their parking ratios set at 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet, then those locations within 2,000 feet of the Stamford Transportation Center should have their parking ratio requirements reduced by 20 percent to 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Again, any additional spaces should be made available to the public, including commuters. Some have suggested that measures such as these will weaken the market for offices in Stamford, but the benefits of reduced traffic congestion and the other features of this Master Plan would outweigh these concerns.

D5.6 Consider parking pricing strategies. The free parking provided by most employers in Stamford works as a subsidy to those who drive, and discriminates against those who use transit or walk to work, or would like to. By offering the equivalent value of the free parking to those who do not drive alone to work, this imbalance can be blunted. Such a measure, known as "cashing out of free parking," is controversial and may be difficult to put in place administratively. Nevertheless, its positive impacts where it has been tried have been significant, and the City should closely monitor this program elsewhere with a mind to putting it in place if traffic congestion continues to worsen.

D5.7 Remove or reduce traffic bottlenecks. In particular, the City should seek the widening and increase of vertical clearance of railroad bridges along the Turnpike, Atlantic Street, Elm Street, Canal Street and East Main Street. The City should also lobby State and federal funding sources to solve expensive regional constraints on transportation. (Refer also to the *Traffic and Transit* report).